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## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

### WORTH AND DIGNITY OF THE TEACHERS' VOCATION.

By J. M. McWHARF, Ottawa.

(Delivered at the forty-fourth annual meeting.)

THE suggestive thought of our theme is, first, the superior material upon which the teacher works. All useful labor is respectable and honorable. Labor is God's first ordinance to man. He does violence to his constitution and faculties, both physical and mental, who repudiates labor as a means of educating, invigorating and enriching those faculties, and advancing the general interests of humanity, and yet we can not avoid considering a higher and more dignified grade of labor, that works upon a more valuable and precious material and produces a more dignified and important result. The man who builds a wagon is as truly respectable, if he builds it well, as he who constructs a locomotive, and yet the one is a higher grade of mechanical pursuit than the other. The potter who rudely fashions a jug from common clay is as respectable as the artist who shapes the graceful vase from the delicate porcelain, yet the latter occupies a higher department of labor than the former. The man who paints your house, if he does it well, is as truly respectable as the artist who transfers to canvas the loveliest or sublimest scenes of nature; yet is there no distinction in their vocations as to the scale of dignity? The man who quarries the marble from the bowels of the mountain may be as respectable as the one who from the rude, unsightly block brings forth a form of commanding dignity or surpassing loveliness, but you do not place him in the same rank with the sculptor. Shall a man who molds a brick, however respectable a brickmaker he may be, rank in the same grade with one who designs and erects a magnificent cathedral?

The common sense of mankind universally graduates the dignity of any vocation according to the nature of the material with which it works and the results which it produces. If this principle is applied to the teacher's vocation, how forcibly does it illustrate the worth and dignity of that vocation. The material on

which they work is not the transient, changing and perishable forms of matter, but the living, immortal mind. How far superior this to the best forms of matter I need hardly tell. Matter in its noblest forms, its most beautiful combinations, is matter still, and subject to the laws of corruption and decay. He who works upon material subjects, and for material results, must do it under the pressure of a conviction that the results of his labor must be transient and temporary, and that time will write on his noblest memoranda the significant words, "Passing away." What can be accomplished with material forces that will be permanent? It was a sublime achievement to rear the colossal pyramids, that stand covered with the dust of three thousand years upon their hoary summits, and for aught we know may stand for many thousand years to come, but the day will come when those mighty structures must crumble and not a stone be left to mark the place where they so long stood in their useless grandeur. But he that makes an impression on a human mind, for good or evil, is working with things that can not die, and achieving results that will survive forever.

One glance at the nature of the mind must set the worth and dignity of the teacher's vocation in a striking light. It is spiritual essence; hence above the power of change, decay, or corruption. It has nothing to fear from relentless time; its existence is not numbered by years; it takes no count of ages. After all the sublime and beautiful forms with which this creating is crowned have passed away, the mind, the thing on which the teacher works, will but have entered on the infancy of a being which knows no age, and blushes with the rosy dawn of a morning to which gray evening never comes. Then consider the essential powers of the mind, and learn something of the worth and dignity of a vocation which attempts to educe and cultivate these powers. The power of thought or reason is its birthright. You may combine and arrange the particles of matter into striking and beautiful forms, but you can not inspire them with reason; you can not make them think or act. The sculptor may chisel out of the marble a form of wondrous symmetry and matchless grace; it may stand before you, in its exquisite proportion and radiant beauty, like a thing of life; but after all it is a cold, passionless, dead thing; speak to it, it answers not; clasp it, you feel no returning pressure; call upon it to move, to act, and to do, there it stands to mock your urgent appeal. Why seek ye the living among the dead?

But who shall describe the powers and capabilities of the living mind? What words are mighty enough to tell the lofty heights it can scale? The profound abysses it can fathom; it can travel on untiring wing through the vast realm of space; it can ransack the ample storehouse of nature and bring the gems and gold to the light of day; it can bend the very elements to its control; it can oblige the air, the fire and the water to do its bidding; it can harness airy vapor in bands of steel and drive it with thundering speed along the iron road; it can make the sun its artist and compel him to burn upon polished plate the features of its friends. Yea more, it can stay the lightning in its course and send it obedient on its errands; it can sweep the outskirts of space, commune with suns and systems, learn their size, compute their distance, and track their orbits. The mountain is rooted to its place, the sun confined to its course, and the ocean must ebb and flow within its appointed limits; but who shall set a bound to the range of the living mind? Who presume to say to it, thus far shalt thou come and no further? Well did that eloquent orator say in his matchless discourse on the use of astronomy, the earth moves, and the great sweeping tides of air move, and the empires of men move, and the world of thought moves, ever onward and upward to higher facts and bolder theories. Physical things are moving; so the mind of man is ever moving too; but the former will reach their limit in the narrow circles of time before the latter stretches the illimitable area of eternity.

If we analyze the wonderful sensibilities of the mind we but increase our conception of its grandeur. The nerves of sensation which traverse the body are numerous, varied and delicate, yet how unworthy are they if compared with that harp whose thousand strings are strung within the mind. Every spirit, whether of joy or sadness, of hope or fear, desire or disappointment, of love or hate, of rapture or despair, sweep those chords and bring out responsive murmurs. What an ocean of feeling lies within the human heart—now slumbering in repose, now gently stirred with emotion, now swept into fury by the blast of passion, now calmed into stillness by the breath of love. What large capabilities of friendship, patriotism, philanthropy and piety, what deep sensibilities of joy or woe are cradled there. The mind is capable of bliss that exceeds the rapture of angels, or wretchedness that surpasses the anguish of fiends.

With what material thing can you compare the human mind? As well might you liken a painted bubble, vanishing into air, to a

mighty orb careering in majesty along the path of ages. Even then the analogy would be imperfect. The bubble and the star are a like material; they differ only in the degree of their duration; for, not even those glorious constellations, which, Mr. Everett says, far up in the everlasting belfries of the skies chime twelve at midnight, can compare in their material glories with one infant mind. The youngest child who shall wait on the teacher's instructions gives material to work upon as far above the grandest objects of inanimate creation as the mighty substance of eternity surpasses the fitful and feverish shadows of time. Next to the infinite and everlasting God, the grandest thing in this whole creation is the human mind. How dignified, how responsible, how sublime that vocation which works on such material as this. An unskillful sculptor may spoil a block of marble, an unskillful physician may damage a mortal body, but an unskillful teacher may ruin forever an immortal mind. Working with such material, we naturally expect that the results of their labors would be of corresponding value and permanence. To demonstrate this the entire history of literature brings its records; its most illustrious names come forth at our command and give their testimony. All the world's learning is but the product of mind, the fruit of the teacher's work; the splendid and enduring results of that vocation. The illustrious disciple of Socrates centuries ago gave to the world a system of learning—a system which for insight into ultimate principles is to-day at the head of all human knowledge. The *Novum Organum* of Bacon and the *Principia* of Newton will outlive the proudest material works of the age which gave them birth.

Hugo Grotius, as he sat in his quiet retreat in one of the Italian cities where he sojourned in exile from his country, and there wrote in his secluded study a treatise which gave law to mankind in all future ages. On sea and on land, on all seas and all lands, he shall bear sway. In the silence of that quiet study the same Grotius forged a scepter which to-day compels the allegiance of princes and people, defines their rights, arranges their intercourse, and gives them terms of war and peace which they may not disregard. In the day of battle, too, when king and kingdoms are thundering in the shock of arms, this same thoughtful student shall be there in all the turmoil of passion and the smoke of ruin, as a presiding throne of law, commanding above the commanders, and, when the fortunes of the day are decided, prescribing to the victor terms of mercy and justice which not even his hatred of the foe nor the exultation of the hour may dare to transcend. When

the splendid pile in which Butler, the prelate, officiated, shall have crumbled to dust, his analogy of religion to the constitution and course of nature will survive, an imperishable monument to his genius, a magnificent argument for Christianity, and an enduring contribution to the standard literature of the world.

The blind old man of Scio's isle still sings his melodious numbers, the orations of Demosthenes are the world's models of eloquence, while the Parthenon is in ruins, and broken arches and smoldering columns strive with stammering tongues to tell what Athens once was. Ages roll along; revolutions sweep over empires; the lofty piles of architectural grandeur disappear like palaces of clouds; but the products of the mind still live in the records of history, the strains of poetry, the teaching of philosophy, and the utterance of eloquence. The proudest effort of the architect, the finest conception of the painter, the lifelike creation of the sculptor, must perish and be no more; but the results of the teacher's work, as he educes, shapes and sends forth to action the glorious human mind, survives the wreck of material forms, and waxes more vigorous and potential with the lapse of ages. On an obscure street in London stands a small weather-beaten chapel. There years ago an English nobleman listened to the instruction of a humble Christian teacher. Very few have heard of Wheeler Street chapel, and the name of the minister is forgotten; but the civilized world has heard of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton. The chains of the slave loosen at the mention of his name, and Ethiopia stretches out her hand to welcome him to her fond embrace, and the children of her schools, which were founded by his care, have learned his history by heart, and will engrave it on bracelets of gold around their wrists. The skill with which he gained the sympathy of his countryman, and the vigor with which he broke the bonds of the West India slave, he traces back to the educating influence of a pulpit in that humble sanctuary.

The world's history abundantly testifies from the great results of the teacher's work, whether they teach in a schoolhouse or in a church, to the exalted dignity of their vocation. The teacher is engaged in developing and making available the true wealth of the state. Our commonwealth is rich in all the varied elements of beauty and greatness. With a noble territory, a temperate climate, a fertile soil, an industrious, enterprising and intelligent population, and vast works of internal improvement, she has nothing to ask in the way of natural resources, and for the grand, the beautiful, the sublime, she can not be excelled by any equal portion of

the round world. We do not point to these as our real wealth; they are some of our best and grandest resources. Our real treasures are the minds of our people. Take from Italy or Spain their purple and golden skies, their balmy air, their luscious fruits, their sparkling wines, and give them men, how long would they occupy their present insignificant position among the nations? They need no material elements of greatness or of power; they need men. This is our strength; it may be our glory. Rightly trained, wisely and thoroughly developed, started into action under right influence, the resources that lie in the minds of the people are incalculable and will secure our greatness.

In the past our men have been our real wealth, the means of our real life, our fortune, and our fame. What had we been in the dark elder days of our national history were it not for the men whom God gave us and whom he fitted so wonderfully for this mighty work? If the legacy which they purchased for us with tears and sacrifices and blood, and transmitted to us hallowed by their memories, is to be preserved in its purity, it must be by men of like spirit with their noble fathers. To form such men from the youthful minds of this state is the great, the solemn, the responsible work of the teacher. These minds are to be committed to their care. These jewels of the commonwealth have the stamp of a noble ancestry on them. The noblest races of the world have contributed to form the American mind. The best blood of Germany, Holland, France and the British Isles have contributed their quota. Gathered from such sources, formed under such influences, subjected to such a training, and transmitted by such a parentage, the American mind is no ordinary one. Energy, resolution, perseverance, ingenuity and boldness are its prominent characteristics. An unextinguishable love of freedom, an instinctive hatred of oppression, an entire independence of thought and action, a decided confidence of its own opinions, a bold, adventurous spirit, all enter into the constitution of the American mind. They are elements of noble nature and extraordinary power. This mind has made itself felt in the past, and it will make itself felt in the future.

These mighty elements, so potent for good or evil, demand that the best influences and most healthful discipline be brought to bear on them in order that they may be thoroughly trained for the best, the noblest action, and not become mighty engines of discord or ruin. The prevailing characteristics of such a mind under a free government, where the most ample scope is afforded for its

activity, furnishes a fitting field for the demagogue and the charlatan, both in church and state. There is no form of impostor, however gross, however monstrous; no radicalism or fanaticism, however malignant or revolutionary, which this restless, speculative, busy, adventurous American mind is not ready to adopt; and there is no country, strange as it may appear, which affords such a field for reformers, fanatics, enthusiasts and demagogues of every class, color and sex as this same intelligent and free America. How responsible, then, the work of educating a mind like this. How great the task of giving to it proper tone, development, discipline, and concentrating its masterly qualities to the best and noblest ends.

The teachings of nature, the physical influences of our country, are on the grandest scale and of the loftiest character, well fitted in their degree to develop and invigorate the minds of the people. Our towering mountains, our ample prairies, our majestic rivers, our mighty inland seas, our sublime forests, our magnificent cataracts, furnish a fitting physical school for such a mind, a noble place for its education and activity. Let its mental training be of corresponding breadth and grandeur. Add to all the sciences of the earth the noble science of God; bring those principles of moral science, which are lofty, like our mountains; those fundamental precepts of Christianity, which are broad, like our plains; those motives of excellence presented by religion, whose power is like the rushing of our mighty streams, and those wholesome restraints of moral law which are as unyielding as our granite rocks—bring all to bear upon these vigorous, enthusiastic, active, adventurous minds, and you will insure their rapid and onward progress in all that exalts and adorns the state.

To such a solemn work as this; to a work with such noble material; a work with such grand results; a work which aims to develop and make available the real wealth and resources of the state, the teacher is engaged. A solemn trust is committed to their charge, for, in the school room the children of the masses and the classes are in touch. It is a time when character is being formed; it is here that the American boy and the German girl associate; the boy of the banker and the girl of the blacksmith meet. Upon this level all classes and conditions come together, and the lesson learned is, that brawn, will and intelligence, not the pocketbook and social distinction, constitute the essence of life. They are children of a democracy, upon one platform, one common level, and a common aspiration. These conditions make children self-respecting and representative citizens as they advance to manhood and



womanhood. There are ideas, sentiments, aims and hopes which are held to be true and good by all; they lie at the root of human life and human character. He who awakens and confirms this priceless work of intellectual and moral power will turn all energies to the life work of education. There can be no higher aim. That man who is active in learning and doing what is true and good and beautiful in private and public life has not only education, but he will continue to educate along a higher and purer life. In the teachings of our great educators, poets and sages we find that they are the source from which has come the inspiration essential to the highest development and usefulness of mankind. Death will come to a nation if the home, the church and the school fail in their purpose of education and instruction. These institutions are the nursery of American patriotism. In fact, the nursery of absolute patriotism in every land, in every age and under every flag has and will continue to be the true Christian home.

True education, then, demands unity as its fundamental ideal. Each human power must receive special training, but not a development for itself alone. We find two basal elements in character—a well-balanced mind and a strong, fully nourished, responsive body. Correct physical training aids in the development of both; while it does not increase the number of brain cells, it develops and increases their energy and activity. Mental and spiritual forces are now to be the great controlling agents in shaping the history and directing the destinies of men and nations. In earlier ages the thoughtful mind was a power among men. The monarch of Egypt trembled as the youthful Hebrew read his dream, and silence and fear came upon the Babylonish king as the gifted Daniel unlocked for him the dark secrets of the future. If Marius had been able to have wielded the same power in the senate which he did on the battle-field, he would never, in fact could never, have sat among the ruins of Carthage an exile in disgrace. But in the coming ages the thoughtful mind is to be the greatest power among men. Those whose vocation is to train and furnish mind, they are the men who are to shape and color the destinies of the world. To that class I would say, go forth to the noble, the honorable, the responsible work that is before you. The state confides much to you; in return she expects much from you. You are furnished with the elements of power over youthful minds, and the state looks to you to so use those elements that they shall add to her strength and make permanent her glory.

You are to demonstrate that peculiarity of American institu-

tions by which we are distinguished from the Old World. Their principles are concentration, ours diffusion; their chief regards are for the few, ours for the many. They tell us that we have as yet made no contribution to the distinguished scholarships of the world; we point to our common schools, and tell them that we would not exchange these for all the glory of English literature. We may be in our infancy, but it is the infancy of a giant. Your work, if well done, must bear fruitage in the years to come. You are erecting an imperishable monument—one not built with marble, but with years; the mortar is not made of lime or sand, but of brains and love, and it is not mixed with water, but with sweat and tears. Man can not live forever in a brownstone front, or in gold. Death, shod with eternity, will grind to dust libraries, churches, hospitals, and schools, but it can not destroy an eternal truth. If you wisely shape the environments of those about you and transmit that which is true and good, you will live. The waves of time shall then dash impotently against your life. Its work will live on through time.

The choicest treasures of our commonwealth are intrusted to our teachers; the glory of the state is committed to their charge. Make our children true men and women, fitted by cultivation of the intellectual and moral nature for the places which they ought to fill and the destiny to which they may be called. Thus you will contribute to the highest welfare and glory of our commonwealth.

Teachers, respect your work and respect yourselves. What you do for others you carry into the larger life as a part of the eternal possessions. You are developed, educated, and formed, and you can develop, educate and form others. Men of genius create masterpieces by throwing their whole life into their work. You must believe in it; you must love it. Teach the child to see, hear, feel, wonder, admire, revere, believe, hope, and love. To this end the process of teaching and discipline is to be made subservient.

Emerson said: "Cobble shoes, maul rails, pick up stones, plough, make hempen rope, hang yourself at the end of one of them, but don't teach school." Carlyle must have been imbued with the same spirit when he said: "Whom the Gods wish to make miserable they first make teachers of." But I say, no man or set of men entered upon a better, a grander, a more honorable, a more worthy or a more dignified class of work, a work so redolent with achievement and worth as that in which you are engaged.

Creative art or learning is justly proud of the distinguished

names associated with it. Each inspires the same human interest and is characterized by the same passionate devotion.

The name of Galileo is to-day a vivid figure in history. We look with pride coupled with reverence upon the old bronze lamp as it swings suspended by the rope in the Duomo at Pisa. There it hung centuries ago, when Galileo watched it.

Copernicus turned over with stricken hand his book on the solar system—the one he dared not publish before. This figure excites sympathy and indignation. We see the genius of Michael Angelo as it presides over the art and the architecture of Rome. Raphael will forever stand beside the glowing canvas of the Sistine Madonna as it burns itself into the soul of every beholder. Can we not in our imagination see Scott standing within the deep shadows of Melrose Abbey, or strolling in the woods about Abbott's Ford? How sweetly the chimes of Holy Trinity Church ring out over the hills about Stratford on Avon.

In the corner of the Hathaway cottage lingers the shade of Ann Hathaway and William Shakespeare. Over three hundred years the ashes of Shakespeare have reposed beneath the marble slab in Holy Trinity, guarded by the famous couplet:

“Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.”

Through the ages these men live in history, so the work of the teacher will live on through the ages until time shall be no more, for—

“Since the universe began,  
And till it shall be ended,  
The soul of nature, soul of man,  
And the soul of God are blended.”